THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The Indian Rupee has appreciated against all the four major freely convertible currencies and recorded the highest appreciation during the first six months of the current financial year against the US Dollar. The impact of rupee appreciation has been acutely felt by the exporting community, in particular, by those sectors whose inputs are less import driven, labour intensive and where value addition is low. The significance of the rupee's appreciation against the dollar is due to the fact that almost 70% of India's external trade is invoiced in dollars and any change in the dollar's rupees value has a disproportionate effect on the various stakeholders in the Rupee's external value such as importers, exporters, borrowers, lenders and consumers of imported goods.

(c) Some of these sectors which have shown negative growth for the period ending December 2007 as compared to the same period last year are tea (-9.4%), cashew (-9.9%), foods and vegetables (-32.3%), marine products (-50.1%), leather and leather manufacturing (-19.6%), cotton yarn/fabrics/made-ups etc. (-15.1%), readymade garments of all textiles (-24%), carpet (-37.5%), handicrafts excluding hand-made carpets (-75.5%).

(d) Considering the seriousness of the situation, Government has taken a number of measures to provide relief to the exporting community. The relief measures include enhancement of DEPB/Duty Drawback rates, Decrease of ECGC premium, Provision of Interest Subvention for reduced pre and post shipment credit, Faster clearance of TED and CST claims, Exemption/Refund of Service Tax in respect of certain services, Funds in EEFC account made interest bearing etc.

Uniform rewards to soldiers by States

127. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether State/UT Governments extend a variety of assistance to its citizens who have shown and won exemplary valour and colour as soldiers in war and peace;

(b) whether in the absence of a fixed criteria, such rewards vary from State to State, i.e. while some award thousands of rupees, others reward their brave soldiers with gifts worth lakhs of rupees;

(c) whether such discrimination for similar colours/medals is having debilitating impact on the soldier's morale; and

(d) if so, details thereof and measures contemplated to bring about uniformity in the matter of largesse conferred by State Government on its soldiers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) The impact cannot be termed as debilitating but there is some dissatisfaction/ disappointment amongst the awardees on this account. Payment of these grants is a matter for State Governments to decide depending upon varying factors like their financial capability, etc.